

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## April 2017 Newsletter

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*This month we feature another snow photo by Mike Haire. See the larger image and story on page 3.*

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### Scheduled Events & Notices



- Apr 22** Colfax Caboose Work Day 9am-1pm (rescheduled due to weather)
- Apr 26** Colfax Caboose Planning Meeting 7pm at the caboose (bring a chair)
- Apr 27** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation 7pm  
– Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge  
– Program – Gary Gurske will talk about his experiences as a conductor with the Penn Central and Conrail.
- May 13** Colfax Caboose Work Day 9am-1pm
- May 25** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation 7pm  
– Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge – Program To Be Announced

### Monthly Meeting 7PM Thursday, April 27th, Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge

**April Program:** Gary Gurske will talk about his experiences as a conductor with the Penn Central and Conrail. Gary owns a private passenger car and a caboose that operate on short lines.

**March Program Recap:** Peter Hills entertained meeting attendees with a photo recap of his recent speeder journeys on Canada's Vancouver Island, Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad, and the Coos Bay Rail Link. He also included photos and comments from his visits to the North Carolina Spencer Railway Museum (N&W 611) and the Tennessee Valley Railway Museum.

### Potential AMTRAK Budget Cuts

AMTRAK's subsidies for long-distance trains are once again facing substantial cuts or elimination in the 2018 Federal budget. Impacts of these cuts would likely be the demise of trains such as the California Zephyr and Coast Starlight, which experience lower ridership in the wide-open spaces between population centers. Locally subsidized lines like Capitol Corridor and the Cascades would likely survive. This is not the first time funding for these long-distance lines has been challenged, but the proposed budget takes a strong stand against continuing the Federal funding subsidies.

The summary below of the budget proposal was posted at Trains.com dated March 16, 2017.

WASHINGTON — Amtrak and mass transit face severe budget cuts under President Trump's proposed fiscal 2018 budget. And a grant program that has provided funds for rail projects is on the verge of elimination.

The 2018 budget would eliminate subsidies for Amtrak's long-distance trains, "which have long been inefficient and incur the vast majority of Amtrak's operating losses" according to budget documents released overnight. Document writers say cuts would allow the railroad's management to focus on better management of the Northeast Corridor and state-sup-

ported passenger rail services.

In a response this morning, Amtrak officials said the cuts would eliminate train service in 23 of the 46 states the system now serves. Those trains feed the Northeast Corridor and state-supported services.

"Amtrak is very focused on running efficiently," Amtrak officials say in a statement. "We covered 94 percent of our total network operating costs through ticket sales and other revenues in [fiscal year 2016] — but these services all require Federal investment."

The budget will not provide for any new projects under the Federal Transit Administration's capital investment program. Rather, budget document writers say the change leaves funding up to "localities that use and benefit from these localized projects."

Officials with the American Public Transportation Association say they are surprised and disappointed with the budget details so far. At a time when the administration is touting \$1 trillion for infrastructure, "the White House is recommending cutting billions of dollars from existing transportation and public transit infrastructure programs," APTA officials say.

Association officials say that the cuts would affect projects in Kansas City; Dallas; Fort Worth, Texas; Indianapolis; Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Fort Lauderdale, and Jacksonville, Fla.

The budget proposal also calls for eliminating funding for "unauthorized" Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grants. In January, the Department of Transportation announced \$500 million was available for the popular program, which has been funding projects since 2009.

Among the 2016 grant recipients are San Bernardino County, Calif., which received \$8.6 million for passenger rail service; Mississippi's 65-mile long Natchez Railway, that received \$10 million for rehabilitation and upgrades for five bridges; and the Springfield, Ill., which received \$14 million to build two underpasses for proposed high-speed service between St. Louis and Chicago.

### **Passing Scene**

**Donner Snow Scene** – With the continuing winter weather and record snowfall, we are featuring another Mike Haire snow photo, this one of AMTRAK #5 at Troy. Note the clean cut made earlier by the rotary to clear accumulated snow from the edge of the tracks. Mike's photo of the rotary in action that appeared in the PSRHS March newsletter is featured in the May issue of Trains Magazine. Congratulations, Mike!



### **Amazon Smile Fund Raising**

We are now part of the Amazon Smile fund raising campaign. We receive a donation to the society based on your purchases. Please feel free to copy and paste the link below and include it in all your emails.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0488569>



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### From the Archives

**March Mystery Photo (right):** Tunnel 22 near Clipper Gap is under construction as part of double-tracking the route in 1910-14. During construction, contractors used their own numbering for the new tunnels. This was the seventh tunnel along the new number two track, thus the Tunnel 7 label on the photo. When the new line was accepted by SP, the tunnels were renumbered starting with Tunnel 15 near Loomis (original Tunnel 15 had been daylighted prior to starting the double-tracking project).  
*Photo courtesy of Art Sommers*



**April Mystery Photo (left):** What was this building before it was damaged/destroyed, where was it located, and what caused the damage? Hint: There are railroad tracks at the far left edge of the scene. Answers next month. *Ken Yeo Collection*

**Accidents/Other Incidents.** From earliest days of operation, wooden snow sheds were a major aid in keeping tracks open over Donner Summit during winter snowstorms, but they were also a fire hazard. The Grass Valley Union included this item in its Dec. 31, 1876 issue: "SNOW SHEDS BURNED – There were 3,100 feet of snow sheds burned, on the Central Pacific Railroad, yesterday morning. The sheds burnt were between Blue Canon and the summit. The result was that the mail train bound West was delayed several hours. The "wreck" was promptly cleared away, and business over the line is now going forward as usual." An article in the Sacramento Daily Union noted the fire that started near Summit Valley was supposed to have been caused by the locomotive of an eastbound tea train, and nearly 4000 feet of sheds were lost in the extremely hot fire.

#### Membership Information

Individual Members = \$25.00/yr  
Each Additional Family Member = \$5.00/yr

- Monthly Meetings (4th Thursday) and Newsletter
- Member Activities, History Pubs and Field Trips
- Display and Restoration Projects

PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776, Colfax, CA 95713  
or join/renew online at [www.psrhs.org](http://www.psrhs.org)

Reader comments, additional details, etc., are invited on any newsletter items or photos. Please forward comments, suggestions or information for inclusion in future issues of the newsletter to:

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